

Congregational Church of San Mateo
Memorial Garden Study & Design – December 12 & 19 Forums

Jim Ingwersen
Gail Held
George Cintel
John Fyfe

Jim Shaul
Lee Mullery
Kay Harris

Jim Granucci
Bahram Mozayeny
Tim Richmond

Purpose: to provide church membership with a design for encouraging and enabling **use of available outdoor space that stimulates reflection, comfort, peace, conversation, and various ways to remember loved ones.**

Objectives:

- design the space to **induce reflection, comfort, peace, conversation**
- enclose the area to convey its **separate and private environment**
- provide ways for families and members to **remember loved ones**, including the interment of remains
- include **methods for visitors to rest, converse, and linger** (chairs & labyrinth)
- **enable various uses of the space**, including small receptions and gatherings
- incorporate the **grandeur and beauty of two heritage live oak trees** into the campus
- integrate the design with the overall **existing church campus aesthetics and features**
- enable **access** from several directions and **for those with physical limitations**
- accommodate the storage space and egress features of the **Sacred Space** project
- include measures to **secure the space** from unintended use
- **mitigate the sound of traffic** from San Mateo Drive

Design:

- maintain church campus' surfaces, arches, tile, elegant simplicity
- utilize Spanish-Mediterranean motif
- separate but integrate 3 areas: columbarium, water feature, labyrinth
- invite guests into all areas, especially from sanctuary, and for those less mobile
- build a sustainable setting within the canopy of the oaks & verticals of the massive trunks

Features:

Entrance from parking lot:

- 10-ft wide entry; gates are double swing; stucco walls 8 ft high with tile cap
- ground surface is colored concrete blocks and into composite, interlocking paver-brick (porous) and concrete pathing

Labyrinth approx 24 feet square is formed with paths of varied shades of paver-brick

Single **gated access** for wheel chairs/walkers and double gated access for deliveries to Sanctuary:

- surface is a gently rising slope to the ramp up to sanctuary doors

Features, continued:

Looking North:

- Wall to north of labyrinth: planted climbing material to soften the wall; all walls constructed of block with plaster finish in hue of church finishes
- **Wall fountain**
- **Columbarium Wall**, 44 ft wide, 2-3 ft deep; capacity for 300 niches (indiv & family) for interred remains (niches sized at 5x5x7 and 8x8x12)
- Fountain at end of view from sanctuary entrance; recirculating

Westward:

- wrought iron half-height fence to separate the spaces; (avoid a solid wall)
- oak grove, moveable seating and small tables, container plantings
- west curved stucco wall;

Southwest gate, path from sidewalk, and berm into the 6 ft wall (3 ft of wall)

- wall located and curved-shaped in accord with chancel's west wall

Not yet located: Wall of Remembrance for memorializing those whose remains are elsewhere but whose lives are remembered here in the CCSM Memorial Garden

Overall: garden layout accommodates the storage space requests of the Sacred Space project

Preliminary estimates of Probable Costs of Design That Protect Both Oaks:

\$350,000, including:

Columbarium with 300 niches (\$75,000)
Labyrinth of 840 square feet (24 foot square) (\$17,000)
Walls 8' in height, arches, gates (\$125,000)
Lighting, benches, wrought iron, handrails (\$54,000)
Fountain (\$30,000)
Grading, drainage, irrigation, plant material (\$20,000)
Contingency (\$29,000)

Funding and Management Plan:

- Niches in columbarium (single & family) for interring remains would be purchased by members over time
- Features of the garden would be available to memorialize one's life (with a plaque)
- A given wall could be designated to memorialize a life without interment of ashes in niches
- Construction would begin and conclude before requisite number of niches are sold to cover all costs
- Funding to bridge the delay of sales proceeds would come from a loan with interest from endowment and/or proceeds from a portion of paid pledges to a capital campaign
- Columbarium operation would be guided by an approved set of by laws and would be managed by a committee of the Church governing group.

Concerns and Issues:

Columbarium/Cremated remains: Members have expressed unease with plans to place cremated human remains in proximity to the church instead of a traditional cemetery. "Ashes belong in a cemetery."

Some others are uneasy with proposal that ashes alternatively could be spread in a section of the memorial garden and, if requested and purchased, memorialized with inscription on a plaque or wall. ***Committee believes that adopted rules should prohibit any scattering of ashes in a designated area as is practiced by many churches in a memorial area of the grounds.***

Others feel the wall of 350 square surface feet (8' x 44') with 300 niches will look like a post office wall of boxes, and lack the comfort and warmth and contemplation sought. ***See the exhibits.***

The north wall will make the garden too dark. ***The mock-up of the space in 2008 indicated that there'll be plenty of light for the day-users of the garden.***

There could be some organized forums to explore and discuss these concerns, as well as some written communications distributed to members. Yes, the congregation should vote on the proposed plan before plans are submitted for permits. Removing the current wall will help to open up the space to comfortable area. The garden will have lighting for approved use.

Would the Columbarium and/or the ashes area be available to non-members? ***The Committee believes that a relative of a member or a friend of CCSM should be permitted. This memorial garden should not be a public cemetery.***

Perpetuity of the Columbarium: Should CCSM relocate its campus or cease operation, CCSM will be responsible for notifications to those families with interred remains and all details on moving the remains to another location and with what provisions on administration and management.

Security: the memorial garden is a sacred space and primarily intended for members of CCSM use. ***Locking gates, 8 foot walls, and motion sensitive lighting will be used to address access, security, and detection of unintended use.***

Removing the current wall and the beautiful gate and its archway: ***The wall is bulging by one of the oak trees. We ought to remedy that. The west wall of the concept sketch will replicate the current wall (tile atop) and the south end of the west wall will contain a replicate gate and archway, joining the corner of the chancel building.***

Emergency Exiting from Pilgrim Plaza: will the residents of Pilgrim's Plaza be in greater danger with the garden's north wall? ***No. They still have to go through the gate at the base of their staircase.***

Damage to the Trees; or to the Tree Roots: will the garden construction damage the two heritage oak trees? Will the plantings require sprinkler system for watering? ***The garden design only includes planters for drought-tolerant plants when the planter is under the canopy. The contractor will be required by the City to have an arborist advise on tree protection during and following construction.***

Maintenance: what is projected to be the cost of maintaining the space as a garden, as a meeting space? ***To be determined for budget plans in advance of the 1st operating fiscal year.***

Insurance: Would CCSM need to tell its insurance company of this project? What could be the consequences? ***Yes. It might increase our liability exposure; the property value would increase.***

Management: as a columbarium & meeting space, who will manage the space, the gift funds, niche purchases/pledges/collections? Who's going to handle all the paperwork? See above.

CCSM Campus Facility Priorities: Will this project postpone or replace other projects deemed desirable by many in the congregation: better access into the Narthex and improvements to the Chancel space? ***The congregational membership decides what the priorities are for major projects, and votes on whether to undertake a major project. The Board should assess where this proposal ranks among other projects that have been discussed off and on, like improvements and repairs to the Chancel space and Narthex access for physically limited. The Board decides when it is appropriate to propose a project to the members for education, discussion, and decision.***

Noise: The design proposes use of 8 ft walls, a berm, plantings, and a fountain to provide noise abatement methods for the traffic on San Mateo Drive.

Plentiful Communication with Members and Neighbors: the Committee and CCSM Board are responsible for communicating the concept, research, and design proposals to the members and to the City. ***The Board will determine if the project should enter a further phase of planning. The congregation will decide if CCSM should submit plans to acquire permits. If plans are submitted, the City will require meetings with neighbors.***

Funding: how will the sources and levels of funding proposed for this project impact fundraising for other facility projects (chancel, narthex)? ***We will learn more from the feasibility study and perhaps the forums before and after that study. But the purchase of niches acquires a resting place (which in most cases will need to be purchased somewhere and sometime anyway). We expect the construction cost to be covered over time by the sale of niches and memorial naming opportunities. In that case, there should be no impact upon the Church's operating budget.***

Impact on current uses of space: how does the design affect:

- the current ramp & its access to sanctuary? ***Plan A replaces the current temporary ramp with a permanent ramp.***
- the number of handicapped parking spaces: ***reduced by 2 but those spaces are not currently confirming to regulations.***
- the storage of the stage in the shed: ***there will be storage space included in the other project's plans***
- the residents of Pilgrim Plaza: ***residents will be met with during permit process***

Alternative Uses of Northwest corner of campus: Is this the best use of that space for decades ahead? ***This northwest corner of the CCSM campus has remained undeveloped for nearly 80 years; in that time the only use that has been suggested is a separate chapel. We think this is the best use possible, and will not preclude any other conceivable superior use.***

Project Study Budget Status

Sources and Amounts of Funding:

CCSM Memorials Fund:	\$29,000
Atkinson Fund	\$10,000
Gifts	\$ 1,025
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Sum	\$40,025

Uses of Funds to Date:

First Landscape Architect	\$ 9,400
Civil Engineering	\$ 3,000
Soils Engineering	\$ 2,350
Transfer to Sacred Space	\$ 5,000
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Sum	\$19,750
Balance	\$20,275

Current Commitments:

John Cahalan landscape	\$15,950
Arborist	\$ 1,300
Reimbursements	\$ 1,000
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Sum	\$18,250

Local Memorial Gardens (visited by Jim Ingwersen) (8.1.08)

1. First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, CA.* This is a handsome garden, defined by low, brick walls, and featuring a large redwood, a rock, some benches, and a wall on which standard bronze plaques are placed in memory of those whose ashes are either scattered or interred on the grounds. A map is kept in the Church office locating the interred remains. Fee is \$800 payable "at the time of need". This covers the plaque and "perpetual care". Services are conducted annually in the garden on All Souls Day.

2. St. Paul's Church (Episcopal), Burlingame, CA*. This is a particularly charming garden, a secluded, irregular space with nooks and crannies, and protected from the El Camino by a high wall. It features a columbarium, a fountain and benches. A niche costs \$5,000, \$4,000 of which is a tax deductible gift to the Church. The Columbarium is administered by a Church Committee. Use is restricted to members and their families, but friends may be admitted on approval of the Rector. A portion of the amount paid is said to be set aside to provide for perpetual care. The remains of one or two persons may be placed in a niche.

3. First Plymouth Church, Lincoln, NE*. This church features a large garden, enclosed on one side by the church building and on others by low, brick walls, in which the niches are incorporated. The family is required to deliver the remains in a metal container with the name and dates of the deceased engraved on it. The urn is then placed in the niche, and a stone on which the same information appears is supplied by the church, in standard format. One or two urns may occupy a single niche. The cost, payable in advance, is \$1,000, of which \$750 is a donation to the Church's

Development Fund. The family also pays \$120 to engrave the front plate of the niche. (Note: Jim Keck says maintenance of the Garden can become a contentious issue - there is in fact no line item in the Church's accounts providing for "endowed" maintenance.)

4. First Presbyterian Church, Burlingame, CA*. This church has a small "Memorial Prayer Garden", which is in an interior courtyard. Remains are "inurned", that is, the remains in an urn or other suitable container are placed in a "Burial Space". These spaces (of which there are 400) are in round, steel canisters, possible 10 inches in diameter, scattered among the planting. A small board on the wall displays names and dates of decedents on small, bronze plaques, about the size of a business card. Only baptized members or former members of the parish are eligible; others in the discretion of the Session. Cost (in 1990) was \$250 for members; \$500 for non-members. Appropriate services of committal are required at time of interment.

5. Trinity Episcopal Church, Ashland, OR*. This garden features a labyrinth, a fountain, benches, pergolas, planting, and a columbarium. It is open, and is adjacent to Highway 99 north bound; however, it has an air of tranquility. Use of the columbarium is restricted to members of the church and close relatives; their names and dates are inscribed on the face plates of the niches. Behind the columbarium is "sacred ground" on which remains may either be sprinkled, or placed in a biodegradable container and buried in a shallow hole. The names of these decedents are inscribed on a board on the side of the Church. Cost of a niche is \$600, payable at time reserved; burial in the "Sacred Ground" is \$400.

6. Church of St. Matthew (Episcopal), San Mateo, CA. This Church has a "Memorial Garden", a redwood grove adjacent to the parking lot. It has a couple of plaques in it, a bench, and a sun-clock; no burial facilities are provided. (There are about six graves under the floor of the sanctuary). The Garden is a pleasing, quiet space.

7. Church of the Transfiguration (Episcopal), San Mateo, CA. At the rear of this church there is a "Quiet Space" garden, a redwood grove, in which remains are buried in biodegradable containers. There are no markers in the garden, but the church office keeps a map of the burial spaces. There is a board in the chapel on which the names and dates of decedents are inscribed. The city limits the number of interments; how many?? Services are held annually on Good Friday. Frequently, the memorial and the committal service are done together. A representative told me that having the burial ground on the premises tends to enhance the church experience of the survivors, some of whom might not otherwise have continued their connection with the parish. Cost?

Note: Menlo Park Presbyterian does not have a "sacred space" or columbarium.